

University of Michigan Law School

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### Class of 1959 Fifteen Year Report Alumni Comments

University of Michigan Law School

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What I missed in my law school education was contact with the experiences of the practice of law would be after graduation. Consequently, I would recommend revision of the curriculum by adding courses or clinics to provide such experiences. Such courses could include legal clinics or workshops to provide free legal services to the poor; work in the local government or District Attorney offices; a course on the economics of law office management.

\*\*\*\*\*

The University of Michigan Law School was one of the best things that ever happened to me.

\*\*\*\*\*

A course in law office management would be worthwhile.

\*\*\*\*\*

I would be proud to have any of my children attend the University of Michigan Law School, however, I really never could understand the philosophy of flunking out 1/3 to 1/2 of the freshmen students. I felt the freshman year was degrading on many students and in part harmful to their future careers. The so called "axe" theory was never accepted by me. There was a noticeable change in the faculty attitude after the freshman year, and I feel that attitude should have commenced the first year in Law School. The ability to think through a problem has to be the greatest asset the School gives to its students -- In retrospect it was a good experience in my life.

\*\*\*\*\*

Last ans. assumes Mich. is the same. I have heard it might not be. I am opposed to trade school approach which Burger appears to favor. Too many lawyers know how to do everything but think.

\*\*\*\*\*

The answer to question IV may confuse. My father was a lawyer but he never graduated from high school. Furthermore, he never attended college or law school. He earned the equivalent of a high school diploma and subsequently studied law privately. I believe he was the last person in New Hampshire] to be permitted to take the bar exam without having graduated from an accredited law school.

\*\*\*\*\*

As to "F" above, I did come away from Michigan with the feeling that little attention is paid to the average or better than average law student - those falling just below Law Review or Coif. A mere "good" student seemed overlooked - even as to job recruiting. I have always felt that had I gone to a local law school - and perhaps been Law Review, I might have fared somewhat better later. However, the "Michigan" name has been helpful on occasion - and I do think fondly of Michigan.

\*\*\*\*\*

There is a more rewarding way to spend ones life than in solving other peoples problems.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Michigan Law School gave a terrific legal education. I question, however, if there couldn't be less dependence on the Socratic Method. I think it is too much of a change from University teaching without an introduction period. Also I would stress pre-law in college for the sole purpose of familiarizing the student with legal terminology. Also accounting is very important.

\*\*\*\*\*

F. XVIII is not a fair question. If the child wanted to study law -- not because I urged it, that would be fine. Same with studying at Michigan. I count the most valuable aspect of my legal education to be the experience, particularly in the first year, of the case method of instruction; and I deplore what appear to be current trends against it. The experience of Jack Dawson in person and Edgar Durfee through his casebook, were the intellectual cream of my law school experience, and a greater contribution to my "liberal arts" education than all my undergraduate years. A different, but equally valuable part of my legal education was extensive research and writing, on the Law Review in special projects for Eric Stein, and (as an instructor!) in the Problem & Research program. The moot court competition also merits favorable mention in this category. I applauded the extension of writing experience beyond the favored few on the Law Review through the Problems & Research program.

\*\*\*\*\*

Please excuse scribbling and corrections! I have managed to maintain a very busy, challenging practice including significant appellate practice, stay married, raise three children who have never been behavior problems, serve as a city commissioner in a small (30,000 pop.) but active community and to ~~be~~ take some splendid vacations!

\*\*\*\*\*

I am interested in the results of this survey. I am debating on whether my children should be directed into medicine as a career. I believe the law school should spend more effort in the area of the practical approach to law, rather than its emphasis on the academic. After all - we all can't be appellate judges or wall street lawyers.

\*\*\*\*\*

As to F. XVIII both Yes answers are qualified. My preference for law study would be greater than study only in another professional area. My preference for Michigan is tempered by my recognition of Harvard Law School standing, particularly in the East.

\*\*\*\*\*

My law school years and training were a very rewarding experience.

\*\*\*\*\*

I am doing what I set out to do-general practice in a small town. I have satisfied my goals financially and feel that I am respected by my fellow practitioners. My children will soon be graduating from high school (3-6 yrs.) and I am sure none of them wishes to be an attorney because as they say it "they work too hard". It is very tough being a general practitioner - trying to keep up with it all, spend time with your family and fulfill civic obligations for your community. Blackstone said, "The law is a jealous mistress." My wife agrees. I wouldn't have it any different for me but hope for a different life for my children.

\*\*\*\*\*

I believe that my training received at Michigan was exceptional. I am most satisfied with my law school education.

\*\*\*\*\*

Michigan policy (at least when I graduated) of revealing graduate class rank hurts initial chances of non-law Review graduates obtaining positions with law firms. Schools such as Harvard with similar high standards believe each of its graduates is superior when compared to law school graduates nationwide and thus do no rank graduates so in the eyes of employers they are the same (with the exception of Law Review members who can of course say they are Law Review) In addition, when I graduated the law school placement services existed more for law review graduates.

\*\*\*\*\*

If it is of any value in your study, I shall indicate that although I believe I have accomplished a level of success and achieved reputation better than others of my contemporaries in the Utah Bar (record of success in several important cases; prestigious clients; reasonably good income for this community; and "A" rating in Martindale-Hubbell; leading partner in an excellent and well respected firm; appointed by judiciary to important committees, etc.) I do not consider myself really well suited, temperamentally for the practice of law and I would not choose this career were I starting over. Although a substantial part of my practice is trial-oriented (commercial litigation) I absolutely detest the contention involved in the law. Even without litigation, there is a substantial element of contention involved in the necessarily adversary routine related to most negotiating situations in law -- for example, even in preparation of contracts, leases, etc.

\*\*\*\*\*

My career has been somewhat unusual in that after 6 years as an associate I left private practice to take a legal position with a corporation. Then, after 6 years with the corporation, I returned to private practice, a move I found to be without much precedent. I was affiliated with a firm on a semi-independent basis for 2 years and have now become associated with a large firm, much like my first association. Insofar as I can predict the future, this should be my last move. I waited to complete this form until this move was made.

\*\*\*\*\*

Disliked the arrogance of the law school intensely, but greatly enjoy the practice of law.

\*\*\*\*\*

My law school education gave me the necessary tools for achieving my present position in society. I feel that the discipline and method of instruction are primarily responsible. I would be very disappointed to learn that these things are being changed for whatever reason, even if to accomplish a substantial social contribution. In my view, the school and its reputation should not be tampered with because of a temporary goal.

\*\*\*\*\*

Have had many occasions to be grateful for the high quality of my law school education.

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My answers to 16 & 18 are made with great reservation. While I feel that U of M law school prepared me intellectually for practicing law, it did so only for a big city - big firm type practice. For all the good 3 years at U of M did me, I might better have "read law" in my home town of 20,000-25,000. I'm happy as a lawyer, primarily because of the financial success. But I'm not really sure if I want my children to be lawyers - attend law school, yes - but to practice law, I don't know. It is too difficult today to do a conscientious job for your clients (mostly individuals) and still be a father, husband, member of the community and enjoy life.

\*\*\*\*\*

Perhaps the reason ~~xxx~~ none of my professors stand out as contributing to what success I have achieved results from the fact that I am a trial lawyer. Being specialized as I am, I see two very basic deficiencies in young lawyers. First, they are for the most part, initially incapable of writing as an advocate and they write as law journal candidates. Second, few young lawyers know anything about the ~~xxx~~ trial of a law suit. For the most part, they are incompetent and many continue that way for a longtime to the detriment of public interest.

\*\*\*\*\*

I feel that my education at the University of Michigan Law School was far above what an ordinary law school education would be. The professors were demanding, but the work required was excellent as a prerequisite to high professional standards once graduated. I believe our work load far exceeded the work load of most law school students (other than at the other very fine schools). The high quality of work expected and the approach of the professors tended to make the students really think and analyze, which, to me, was highly important. The Socratic method was valuable during the first year and a half in order to enable a new student to "get the feel" for the law, court cases, and the like. However, thereafter, I feel seminar-type of education and more practical planning type of approaches might be more helpful..I recommend an apprenticeship for any graduate law student prior to being formally admitted to practice.

\*\*\*\*\*

My most valuable experience was teaching because I first had to learn the subject then graded many papers thereby seeing and judging good from bad. (Perhaps a trial lawyer should first be a judge). No question that extensive research and extensive writing is valuable. Also teaching if possible. (The reason I taught after law school is because I knew my legal background was inadequate. It was a miserable year at Berkeley, but well worth it in the long run) Writing compels thinking - clear writing comes from clear thinking-I wish every course after the first year were completely research and writing.

\*\*\*\*\*

Quality of teachers paramount. Constant quality review. Third year is a waste should be converted to a year of preparation for practice, but not a boondoggle year guided by incompetent recent graduates, but rather a true intern year of bona-fide, realistic training. Top practicing lawyers as faculty. Basic courses should be emphasized in remaining (i.e., first) two years. Cut out esoterica. Some substitute for exams must be explored (what the sub is, I don't know). Emphasis on exams, and on notetaking, robs study of its spirit.

\*\*\*\*\*

I believe the economic incentive to enter into private practice has been reduced in the last few years. The first few years, private practice is generally less rewarding financially than gov't or corp. employment. In recent years the courts and legislature have been changing the areas of greatest monetary return for an established attorney (i.e. probate, negligence) while calling upon the private attorney to donate more and more of his time to non-paying or low paying services (court appointments, legal aid, etc.) The opportunity for economic reward ultimately, to offset the initial risk, investment and struggle is diminishing.

\*\*\*\*\*

My first 12 yrs were in Public Service, firstly when appointed Asst. Pros. Atty. then elected for 2 4-yr terms. Then chose not to run for re-election for reasons which are a story in themselves. I then entered private practice. I therefore entered the law business in midstream of my life with a perspective of one who is mature, but a fresh one. My comments: (1) too many lawyers are being trained for the market! (2) The law profession is becoming more and more a business and less and less a profession. (3) Lawyer's ethics leave much to be desired-witness Watergate. This indicates a great failure on the part of law school. (4) too many lawyers decline to be involved in public matters.

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If child wanted law school I would recommend one that gave sound grounding in law generally - Michigan Provided such an education when I attended and appears to be currently providing such an education.

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Some questions are not relevant to my peculiar circumstances. I am a full-time college professor and practicing part-time

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XVIA- There is an overlay between law and accounting profession which should be eliminated. I think taxation should be left to accountants and only tax litigation to lawyers. (B) We should have had sufficient course in professional responsibility to understand our position, at least in relation to our clients, our responsibility to the bar, fees, and above all, when a conflict of interest is possible and how it may be avoided or resolved. Our course in ethics was brief and not highly regarded by the students.

\*\*\*\*\*

My education at Michigan has served me very well indeed. The general courses which drummed in the capability to think ~~xxx~~ logically were the best. Some of my professors, men like Harvey and B.J. George, I disliked intently at the time, but I must reluctantly admit that they taught me law as well or better than most. Michigan could spend more time on legal writing. A lawyer really cannot function unless he can draw documents which express a business deal or write briefs properly. I would not want law school to become a trade school, but I do believe that more time should be spent on legal writing. All most all of my drafting skill was taught to me by my older partners after law school.

\*\*\*\*\*

I feel that law-trainees need more outside practical experience: law office, Courts, etc. I received none during my 3 years at Michigan - I don't feel that case clubs or Moot Court prepare a young lawyer to even argue a traffic case, let alone a felony. Perhaps the Legal Aid law-trainee program is a start, but an extern-intern program would be more meaningful. To me, this is the biggest weakness in our law schools today - we graduate lawyers who can't draw a deed or a will and who can't begin to try a case.

\*\*\*\*\*

I am surprised each year when I go to the law school to recruit at the obvious lack of interest in U.M graduates. Suggest a faculty official greet attorneys during day. How about arranging a luncheon for all recruiting lawyers (at their own expense)? Note that U-M can always free up faculty people to raise money.

\*\*\*\*\*

I believe there could be much more contact with practicing lawyers than there was when I was in law school. Too much academic not enough of the touching of life. Good men now in practise, back for 2 or 3 day or week seminars, could be invaluable.

\*\*\*\*\*

Years at law school were interesting and challenging - although the actual practice of law persé was never considered seriously.

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The Michigan Degree was a significant factor in getting my present position. Other Michigan law graduates I have observed are on the average substantially better lawyers than those from other schools.

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I feel that the quality of legal education at Michigan while I was there was excellent. Its publications and reputation indicates that it has maintained

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[illegible]

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Many law students, self-included, have virtually no knowledge of how commercial transactions, real property sales, secured loans, etc. are consummate. Some lectures on this at the inception of courses such as coporations, securities, sales, etc. would enhance comprehension. E.g., securities cases of an esoteric sort would make more sense if one knew how borrowers get in a bind and think creatively to find acceptable security for the lender and then try to weasel-out when the time comes to pay the piper. Upon further reflection, I think that probably the most crucial courses to successful law practice are property and contracts. Without a good understanding of those topics the rest is just window-dressing.

My emotions are mixed (XVIIIIF) Many other law schools have lower standards and yet produce lawyers of excellent ability. I am concerned that the University of Michigan Law School has become increasingly oriented toward producing Supreme Court Justices and not practicing lawyers. I do not want to see any change in high standards of excellence; but if I want my sons to actually practice law, I'm not at all certain that the U. of M Law School is the best place for them to attain that training or orientation. If I want them to study law only then there is no question mark.

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As do many educators, I believe that a small faculty-student ratio is important for improving the quality of legal education. A school like Michigan is too large to provide the type of contacts required.

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I think that future questionnaires should include under XVII C a category for music and non-varsity athletics. I think that future questionnaires should include under XIV C a category for family responsibilities. Some adjustment needs to be made in future questionnaires regarding XIX, In my own case, I worked as a lawyer the first 5 years after graduation. I did not work professionally fulltime during the next five years, and I have worked full time as a lawyer the past 5 years. Obviously, this makes for misleading averages under XIX if it is assumed that one was working professionally throughout the fifteen year period. (No. 250)

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In reference to the law school curriculum, I believe that more attention should be devoted to techniques of "problem solving" and less attention directed towards formal, rigid predetermined answers. Unfortunately most of my time as a practicing lawyer is devoted to avoiding the harsh results of the routine application of the law by lawyers and judges. Further, the design of the law is to preserve social oppression and the operative law pursues this same direction. The educational system follows in step by supporting a rigid adherence to the status quo relegating those who use and apply the law to social followers who are more often victimizing society rather than contributing to greater harmony and fairness.

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[XVI] Throw out all the Mickey Mouse courses and make them read cases for two years. Third year, no grades. Trial practice courses, Evidence, ethics, and philosophy.

(1) Please publish this survey - without names, of course. etc.

(2) Throughout my practice, I have always felt well prepared to be a lawyer as the result of my education at the U of M law school.

(3) Throw away the horn books - ban them from the library - destroy the outlines - and get the students back to reading 10 tough cases per day at least.

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Upon reflection, I am of the opinion that the course offerings and the required courses within the curricula at the law school are exactly as what they should be. I believe the frequently heard comment that, "There should be more 'practical' courses given in law school," is without merit.

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